

Exeter U3A

Policy: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Exeter U3A recognises that some people are likely to experience discrimination and harassment and is committed to making sure that the U3A is as inclusive and welcoming as possible. This policy should be read alongside the Accessibility policy.

This policy has been drawn up to comply with the Equality Act 2010. The Act stipulates that organisations cannot treat someone unfairly on the basis of what it calls 'protected characteristics', which are:

- Ethnic origin, nationality (or statelessness) or race
- Age
- Disability
- Religion or belief (including the absence of belief)
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy
- Gender reassignment
- Political belief

Exeter U3A will strive to ensure that Members do not experience discrimination on the basis of their 'protected characteristics'. This will include ensuring equal access to groups and events. It will necessitate the Committee, Group Conveners and Members taking responsibility to ensure appropriate behaviour by all.

Member Code of Conduct

Exeter U3A has a Member Code of Conduct. Each member will abide by the U3A's policies and procedures as well as treating each other with dignity, trust and respect. This includes not acting in a way that would be deemed discriminatory or offensive.

Accessibility Officer

An Accessibility Officer will be identified from amongst the Membership. He/she will have responsibility for liaising with Group Conveners on an ongoing basis to ensure that groups are accessible and that Group Conveners are aware of what the expectations are and what adjustments need to be made, if possible.

The Accessibility Officer and Groups Coordinator will ensure that the Group Conveners are made aware of the issues in relation to accessibility. Each group will be reviewed on an individual basis because certain groups may require a specific level of fitness or mobility and Members need to be made aware of this in advance.

Practical Approaches

Exeter U3A will make sure all new and existing members are aware of policies and procedures relating to equality, diversity and inclusion as well as accessibility and the Members Code of Conduct. Reasonable and practical steps will be taken to ensure a wide range of people can participate in activities and meetings.

New Members

- Undertaking outreach sessions and contacting agencies working with community and volunteer groups
- Encouraging participation from people within groups who are underrepresented
- Managing growth to ensure new Members can be accommodated

Meetings

- Consideration of time of day and location of meetings
- Consideration of venue to meet all accessibility needs where possible

Publicity

- Use a variety of methods to communicate externally and raise the profile of the U3A
- Make communications available to those who don't have access to the internet

Monitoring

- Monitor Member numbers in order to identify trends in Membership

U3A Committee

The Equality Act highlights that organisations need to consider what 'reasonable adjustments' can be made in order to accommodate those Members who have particular needs.

The Committee will review the 'reasonable adjustments' needed for all members and individual Members with particular needs on an ongoing basis and will seek additional advice and support from the National Office, national website and external specialists as necessary.

Where the Committee becomes aware of any discriminatory practice or harassment, it will seek to address this through consultation with all parties concerned and, where necessary, through invoking formal procedures.

If any Member feels that they have experienced or witnessed discriminatory behaviour or harassment, this should be reported to the Committee. Any matters of concern will be reviewed by the Committee and a decision made in line with the U3A's Constitution and formal procedures, as to what steps to be taken to address the issue.

Definitions

Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents, and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, when or whom they were born, or because of other characteristics. Promoting equality is about behaving in a way that tackles

inequalities, aiming to ensure that all Members are treated fairly, and do not experience discrimination.

Promoting diversity is about recognising that everyone is different and creating an environment that values Members and ensuring that the U3A is as accessible as possible to different groups within the community.

Inclusion is about positively striving to meet the needs of different people and taking practical steps to ensure Members feel respected.

Direct Discrimination is when a person is treated less favourably because of their ethnic origin, nationality (or statelessness) or race, age, disability, religion or belief (including absence of belief), marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, gender reassignment, political belief.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a condition or requirement is applied equally to all groups of people but has a disproportionately adverse effect on one particular group.

Harassment is unwanted conduct relating to 'protected characteristics' that has the purpose or effect of violating a Member's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment is also unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has that same purpose or effect.

Victimisation occurs when a member is treated less favourably than others in the same circumstances because he or she has made a complaint or an allegation of discrimination, harassment or bullying or given information regarding such a complaint or allegation.

Adoption and Review

This policy is based on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Template ref U3A-KMS-POL-001 published by the Third Age Trust on 01 July 2019 and was adopted by Exeter U3A on 4th September 2023.

Policy review date: September 2025.